

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

March 1983

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- Meeting 4th March. Annual Meeting - Members' Night
All meetings at S.M.B. Barkly St.
- Meeting 8th April. "Focus on Nature" - Speaker Mr.
J. Dowling. (Note 2nd Friday, due to
Good Friday 1st April.)
- Excursion 6th March. Enfield. Leader Mrs. P. Murphy.
- Excursion 10th April. Half Day, Slatey Creek, Leader
Mr. K. Hammond.



Airey's Inlet, 16th Feb. 1983.

President: Dr. F. HARRAP Phone 30 1651

Vice-pres: Mrs. M. ROTHERAM Phone 31 4054

Secretary: Miss H. BURGESS Phone 31 2210

Treasurer: Mr. S. REYNOLDS Phone 32 7721

Photo courtesy Courier

Meetings, as specified, are held in the Administration Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 8 pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS.

REPORTS (February Meeting).

- Mr. Reynolds - Hyacinth orchids in Boronia Crescent.
Mr. Hope - trip to Gordon River reinforced need to preserve S.W. Tasmania.
Mr. Binns - displayed beach-washed specimens from Robe including white-chinned Petrel (rare), Shy Wandering Albatross, Fairy Prion, Southern Giant Petrel.
Mrs. Lade - three red-necked avocet at Lake Wendouree late January.
Mr. Hammond - at Slatey Creek - Rufous Fantail reared two young, White-throated tree-creeper feeding young, one of which was later forced out of the nest by one of the parents - another instance of sacrifice of young due to shortage of food!
Dr. Harrap - Black Honeyeaters at Wendouree in early December. Little Falcon, Doveton St. Nth, Copperhead snake at Mt. Helen. Indian Mynahs at Lerderderg Gorge near Greendale. Olive whistler, Blackwood. Lesser Yellow Legs, Black-tailed Godwit, White-winged Black Tern at Reedy Lakes.
Mr. Jamieson - rare and interesting eucalypts confirmed by the Natural Herbarium - Round Leaf Box north of Bacchus Marsh, Coastal Messmate at Urquhart's Bluff.
Mr. Tiley - Lewin's Rail at Warrak.
Mr. Barclay - Austral Ladies Tresses at gravel pits, Creswick.
Mrs. Tonkin - many waders at Salt Marsh, Cheetham.

S P I D E R S .

"Spiders" was the subject of the talk delivered to us on 4th February. It was a similar talk, given at Creswick several years ago, that eventually led to the formation of the Creswick Field Naturalists Club.

Classified ARACHNIDA, they are close relatives of the other arachnids, including harvestmen (daddy-longlegs), ticks, mites, and scorpions. They are not insects, myriapods, or crustaceans which like the arachnids are classified in the arthropod (joint-legged animals) phylum. Spiders differ from those groups in having 6 pairs of appendages, 4 pairs of which are walking legs, a convenient though superficial way of distinguishing them.

The difference between the groups is more deep-seated. Spiders do not have compound eyes, but usually 8 simple eyes; there are also six-eyed, four-eyed and two-eyed spiders. A few that live in caves have completely lost the eyes or retain only traces of them: spiders have no antennae, but the legs are covered with sensitive bristle-like hairs which make the animal aware of its surroundings - it can neither hear nor smell. Spiders have no true jaws. In front of the mouth (in the third segment) arachnids have a pair of fang-like claws called chelicerae. Behind the mouth (in the fourth segment) is a pair of leg-like appendages called pedipalpi, which like the legs, are sensory. Unlike insects they have no larvae, the spiderlings emerging directly from the eggs.

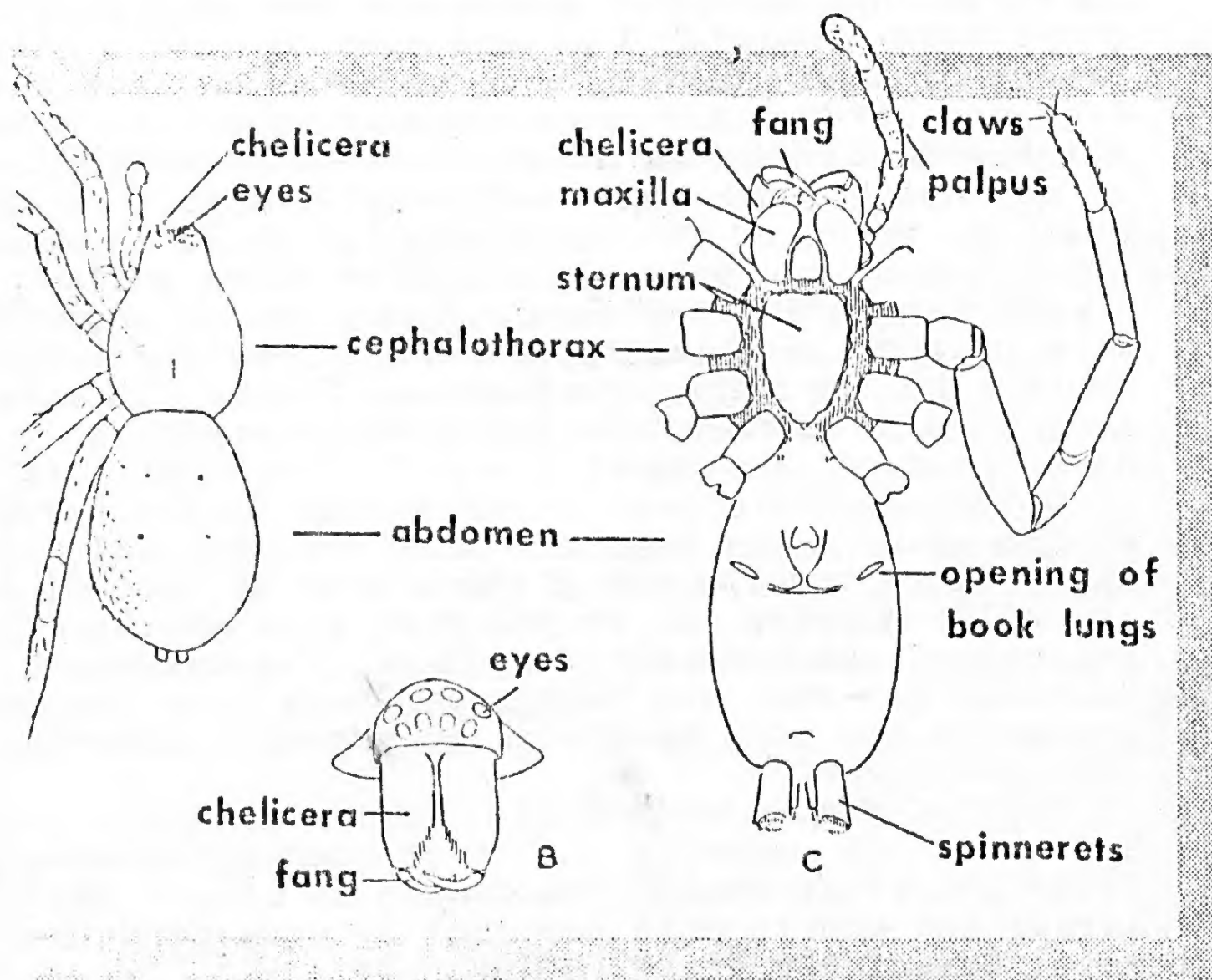
Spiders are the most numerous and widely spread of the arthropods. They are also the most unloved. All spiders have poison glands, used in capturing and killing prey but only a few, such as the red-backed and funnel-web spiders, are dangerous to man. (But they are so ugly!?) Some less familiar arachnids are more dangerous than most spiders (and scorpions!)

Some of the mites and ticks for example. Spiders do an enormous amount of good by consuming flies and other pests. The female is always the larger and supplements her diet by consuming the male, especially after mating!

The spider's body is divided by a narrow waist into two principal regions, the cephalothorax and the abdomen. As the name indicates, the cephalothorax is made up of the head (cephalos) and chest

(thorax) fused together. The cephalothorax is covered by a shield called the carapace, on which are set the eyes. Directly beneath the cephalothorax, at the front end, are the two jaws called chelicerae. These are sharp and pointed and are used for capturing and poisoning prey. Some come together like pincers while others are downward curved and are used in a chopping fashion. The pedipalpi which we have said are sensory, also operate in a jaw-like process to hold and compress the prey. In the male they are modified to pass sperm to the female.

SPIDERS AND THEIR KIN



Seen from above.

Seen from below.

Note that the head and thorax are not separate, but are fused together in one piece.

The abdomen has no appendages, but finger-like organs called spinnerets which contain a battery of minute spinning tubes, sometimes 100 on each spinneret. These produce different kinds of silk for different parts of the web, for making protective cocoons for the eggs, and for binding prey. Some produce a sticky substance to make the threads of the web adhesive.

The mouth of the spider is too small to swallow solid food. Instead, the spider injects a digestive fluid into its prey. The pre-digested and liquefied tissue is sucked up by the muscular sucking stomach aided by the squeezing action of the pedipalpi and the sucking action of the pharynx. It passes into the digestive gland which can absorb large quantities of food at one time, and store some for later use. Several hours are required to suck an ordinary fly completely dry. Although they need water quite often, spiders can go for long periods without food.

The underside of the abdomen bears the openings of the breathing organs: the trachea, and the book lungs, which are peculiar breathing devices found only in arachnids. The book lung is a sac within the abdomen, containing fifteen to twenty shelves, suggesting the pages of a book. All spiders are air-breathing, and none are truly aquatic, although certain species which live on the banks of streams and lakes run over the water and dive into it.

After Mr. Barclay's informative talk and slide presentation, a vote of thanks was passed with acclamation, and the usual small gift given.

Lyndsay Fink.

EXCURSION - February 6th 1983 -

NEWLYN RESERVOIR, WOMBAT STATE FOREST, HEPBURN
LAGOON AND DEAN RESERVOIR.

Eighteen members and friends set out from Crockers at 3.0 pm on a very hot day. Our first stop at Newlyn reservoir provided us with a range of water birds, which included pelican, mountain, musk and white-eyed ducks. The nearby pines had a few thornbills moving through, goldfinches and

grey fantail.

Then on to a small dam on the eastern edge of the Wombat State Forest. We stayed for some time here just sitting, waiting and watching. Birds that came to drink included flame robin, white browed scrubwren, superb blue wren, brown thornbills, white naped, brown-headed and white-eared honeyeaters. A crescent honeyeater appeared briefly in the trees behind the dam as did yellow-tufted honeyeaters.

I had visited the dam on the previous day and have made two further visits, the last on Saturday, February 19th; by which time there was barely enough water to fill a large saucepan. Visitors for water included grey thrush, white throated tree creeper and a number of juvenile crimson rosellas. My last visit was interesting because a dog fox put in an appearance in the young pines on the opposite side of the forest track. He barked on and off for about 15 - 20 minutes and during that time not a single bird came in to drink.

Back to February 6th.-

After tea, we went at around 7.0 pm. to Hepburn Lagoon. With a wary eye out for the bull, who was far more interested in his female companions, we walked through the paddock to the east end of the lagoon. Though there was nothing of any great ornithological interest, the colouring of the weed and the water was very impressive.

Our last call was at Dean Reservoir, where the previous day I had seen a Spotted Harrier. By now a breeze had sprung up and the water was disturbed. We stayed until darkness without any positive sighting of a platypus. We did however see a bird of prey lift briefly out of the pine trees in the gloom, though it couldn't be said that this was the harrier.

Frank Harrap.

AUSTRALIAN NATURAL HISTORY MEDALLION.

Nominations are now being called for the above award, and for the Award General Committee. They close on 1st May 1983.

Bodies making a nomination are free to nominate anyone at all, whether a member of their own society or not.

" Any person shall be eligible for the Award who within the period of ten years immediately preceding nomination has increased popular or scientific knowledge of Australian flora and/ or fauna including Man or has assisted notably in the protection or propagation of Australian flora and/ or fauna or has discovered new species of importance or has devoted considerable time and care to the study of any phase of Australian natural history by the publication of articles or books or by photography or pictorial art or by any other means approved by the Award Committee!" A nomination remains valid for three consecutive years. Recipients of the award for the last ten years were:

Edmund D. Gill (Vic.)
Vincent N. Serventy (W.A.)
Alison M. Ashby (S.A.)
Winifred M. Curtis (Tas.)
John R. Wheeler (Vic.)
Alan Sefton (N.S.W.)
Helen I. Aston (Vic.)
Michael J. Tyler (S.A.)
Elizabeth N. Marks (Qld.)
Howard E. Jarman (Vic.)

Further information is available from our secretary, Helen Burgess.

CAMPOUT, MILDURA: 14th-15th May, 1983.

The organizer, the Sunraysia Naturalists Research Trust recommend, for accommodation, the bushland setting or the banks of the Murray of the Apex Caravan Park. Due to school holidays, firm bookings would have to be made by the end of March.

Lists of hotels, motels, and caravan parks will be available at our March and April meetings.

KINGSTON TOURS announce that the Atherton - Cairns North Queensland Expedition departing on 4th June 1983 has been fully booked. However there will be a repeat expedition departing on 16th July. Further details available at the meeting.

MAPS.

Local maps are available from the Lands Department, State Government offices, Mair St. For example, Frank Harrap has a pair which cover the Brisbane Ranges: Eclipse Creek 1:25000, and Staughton Vale 1: 25000.

A catalogue of Victorian Maps which shows the types of map available, and the scales, can be obtained free of charge.

EDITOR'S THANKS.

As this is my last news sheet, I wish to express my gratitude to all of those members who have helped me during the three years of my editorship.

To my typists Leone Borch, Geraldine Low, Bena McNabb and Gretl Manguss, to Margaret Tonkin, Jean Spicer and Lyndsay Fink for their reports on our monthly meetings, to Graham Hawley for his front-cover sketches, to the many members who have contributed articles and who have written excursion reports, and to Rob. Borch, Frank Harrap and Helen Burgess for their encouragement and support, I express my sincere thanks.

L.C.C. recommendation holds?
Jack Netherway.

* *Great Shire Planning - Flaxmill Swamp?*
access?

* *30 March { Public Meeting re. Public Domain
Enfield Trust } Member for
Comm. Management*